



Ox Close Federation

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Friday 27th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is vitally important that we all stay in touch over during these unprecedented times. Each fortnight, we will send a letter to you all. The link to this letter will be sent via text message – all letters will be uploaded on to the website in the newsletter section.

Extraordinary Times

We are all living in extraordinary times and the events of the past week have been unprecedented. With very little notice, we have been tasked with changing our core purpose. Our fundamental purpose is now to provide emergency childcare to key workers where there is no safe alternative. It has been the most intense period of my career as a Headteacher and I want to take the opportunity in this letter to thank a number of people for helping us in achieving so much in such a short time.

Staff

I met with staff on Monday and outlined our new purpose. In many senses we are now seeking to protect the protectors of our country. Health care professionals are showing incredible bravery and skill in dealing with the crisis and they will need our support increasingly as the situation develops. Our mission is to do our level best to help them by providing that emergency childcare when it is absolutely the only safe option. I have noted that the virus will not be taking an Easter vacation and so our service must continue over that period, a period which was originally designated as a school holiday. Our staff have been magnificent and they are stepping up to the challenge. In times of crisis, we see true character revealed and that has certainly been the case at Ox Close. As leaders, we are putting every possible measure in place to minimise risk and also to provide a safe and happy environment for the children who are using the service. I would like to pay tribute to all of the staff for their amazing commitment, dedication and enthusiasm under the most trying of circumstances. We also have a duty to protect them and we are ensuring that we fulfil our core purpose appropriately and keep staff commitments to an absolute minimum. It has also been heartening to see Nursery and kitchen staff working alongside existing school staff.

Miss Bowden

Through an incredibly challenging period, Miss Bowden has been a fantastic support. Ox Close is very fortunate to have her and I am fortunate personally to have her professional support and friendship. I like to think that we work well together and we certainly had to prove this in organising our new arrangements. I know that we applied guidance accurately and it did involve us both working through the weekend, as well as working around the clock last week as we moved towards an inevitable closure and then the new arrangements. I am sure that you would all join with me in thanking Miss Bowden for her outstanding contribution at this time.



Kitchen Staff

It has been an incredibly difficult time for our amazing kitchen team this week. The Government plan to offer meals to those families who are in receipt of Free School Meals was very much developed at great haste and there was a lot of confusion. Karen and her team have been magnificent and have really stepped up. Meals have also been provided to the children who have been within our care and they have been delicious. Well done and thank you to Karen and the team – we appreciate you.

Provision

This week has been an unusual one as we have settled into our new arrangements. It has been a very successful week and I have been delighted to see how settled the children have been within our setting. They have also had some enjoyable experiences, such as making slime with Mrs Cox, working with the wonderfully talented Brendon Renwick, Mr Football and doing Outdoor Learning with Sam Jackson. I must point out that there is an expectation that the children complete all the work which has been set by their teachers and we have ensured that this has happened.

Communication

It is vitally important that we maintain effective communication with parents and so we will be providing this through letters, texts, Facebook and the School and Nursery websites. Communication was something which we identified as a priority last week as the crisis began to unfold and I identified it as a priority area of our strategy. Wherever possible, we will communicate to keep our amazing Federation community together, even if it is in a virtual sense!

Maintaining Learning

Maintaining the learning of all pupils is of course another essential part of our strategy. As we moved towards inevitable closure, we asked staff to prepare for this eventuality and I would like to acknowledge their commitment and skill in doing this so swiftly and efficiently. We also have 'Virtual Classrooms' on each website which are being updated regularly Mr Crowther is playing a crucial role as he is maintaining the websites and updating Facebook - I must say that he is doing an outstanding job and we really appreciate all of his efforts. Our mantra of 'Be the best that you can be' is being fully applied and will continue to be so. We will be auditing our online provision on a weekly basis and ensuring that we continue to be ahead of the game. A cursory glance at other school websites would indicate that we are providing an excellent level of work and information in comparison to others. I am thinking of ways in which we can continue to improve this and we will explore all possibilities, such as blogging, vlogging and 'top tips' podcasts. Miss Bowden has been working with teachers in the school on the next wave of our learning strategy and she will share details of this in a separate letter to be sent out today also. Mrs Taylor will continue to upload weekly ideas for Nursery parents on to their website.

Message from Pam Sneath, Chair of Governors

On behalf of the Governing Body, I would like to say thank you to the staff who have shown flexibility and adaptability during unprecedented and exceptional circumstances this week. They have continued to keep the school open to those key worker families and vulnerable children who have no alternative childcare. Thank you also to parents for respecting the government guidelines in order to keep all of the children of Ox Close safe. I have been in school two days this week and I have been impressed with the calm and relaxed yet enjoyable environment that we have been able to provide for children from Nursery to Year 6. Please continue to stay safe and take care.

We are thinking of you all at this time. Please continue to follow the advice, stay safe and take care.

Yours faithfully,

D Harrison

Mr Harrison

Executive Headteacher of Ox Close Federation